

WHY ADJUST WAGES BY HARDER WORK?

By Jane Whitaker.

"Work! work! work!

While the cock is crowing aloof!

And work—work—work,

Till the stars shine through the roof!"

She was perhaps eighteen, anemic, with a face that was drained of all color; eyes that were strained, and oh, so weary; a mouth set in a straight, tense line, though it looked as though it had been wrinkled into smiles in the long ago before its owner faced life's grim realities.

She bent perplexedly over some cheap navy blue serge that looked black under the electric light, and she pushed the pattern this way and that, picked up the scissors to cut, grew afraid and laid them down.

Her teacher hastened to her assistance, and when the necessary instructions had been given, said to me:

"I try to help her a great deal because the poor child needs a dress badly."

"Does she work?" I asked, realizing the folly of my question, since only a girl who works by day will learn to sew by night.

"Yes," the teacher replied, and moved away, so I turned and studied the other girls in the room.

They were all like the little eighteen-year-old; only some of them were many years more than eighteen and one or two were less. They were all tired; some of them bit their lips nervously; all of them were drawing on a vitality almost exhausted, all of them worked with stooped shoulders.

They were being taught at night in the public schools to sew in order that they might be able to dress as well as live on the pittance they are paid for their labor.

What would you think of a man who got out and tried to push a car along the track just because the con-

ductor refused to put the pole back on the wire?

Yet it is just as absurd to constantly invent ways by which workers may make the starvation wage they receive cover life's necessities, instead of forcing employers to pay a higher wage.

And it is more than absurd. In a case where it necessitates laboring into the night as well as through the day, it is criminal. Already, because of the pressure of economic conditions, the cry has gone forth that but a few of the present day girls are fit to fulfill the mission for which they were created—motherhood.

A woman physician has declared that the girls of today are nervous wrecks. Well, what does the industrial world do to conserve girls' nerves? They stand all day in stores and must, by the rules of their employers, smile if their feet ache, smile if their heads ache, smile if their backs ache, until every nerve is racked to madness.

Or they work in offices where they are permitted to sit down, but where they are rushed from morning until night, forced to work at a speed that keeps every nerve so highly tensioned that I have seen girls cry when the day was over and not know just why they cried.

And to this, we will add the labor of sewing at night, of sitting hunched up with the lungs unable to expand, with the eyes strained, matching dark colors and light, not only "until the stars shine through the roof," but often until the light of stars has gone out of the sky.

To me it seems inhuman. I am not criticizing the Board of Education in its work of conducting classes to teach sewing of any other thing, so long as these classes are for those who care to acquire this knowledge, but when economic conditions make it necessary that girls shall learn how to sew in order that they may spend